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Porrajmos. Constructing Gypsy Holocaust Memory in the Recent Cinema

And perhaps it is so that my memory chooses what it wants for itself? And perhaps it is even better like this because if Gypsies possessed the whole memory, they would die of grief [1]

Papusza

Abstract: Since the 1990s, the number of films devoted to Roma issues has been increasing at an unprecedented pace. Among them, films on the extermination of the Gypsy during the Second World War can be distinguished.[2] *Porrajmos* in the Romani language means: Romani Holocaust. These events were entirely absent from the public discourse for several decades following the end of the war. The key role in addressing the subject was played by the explosion of memory about the Jewish Holocaust observable since the 1960s. *Porrajmos* films are in all respects secondary to the representation of the Holocaust – they emerged later, use the same set of conventions of representation, and their authors are often the artists who emphasize their belonging to the "community of memory" of the Holocaust: once Jewish victims, nowadays their descendants. The Holocaust discourse has thus begun to fulfill the role of "a dominant culture" which allows the story of the Gypsy genocide, providing it is its subordinate version.

The passage of time paradoxically strengthens the memory of these events, generating an ever-growing number of new places, practices and other texts of remembrance. Nowadays the origin of excavating the Gypsy Holocaust from oblivion is the imminent threat of aggression experienced by members of this ethnic group.

Key words: *Porrajmos*, Holocaust of the Gypsies, Romanies, Films

[1] A. Kuźniak, *Papusza*, Wołowiec 2013, p. 63.

[2] The publication is based on the article: I. Sowińska, "*Porrajmos*. Wytwarzanie pamięci zagłady Cyganów w kinie najnowszym," *Zarządzanie w Kulturze* 2013, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 227–237.

Introduction

Since the 1990s the number of films devoted to Roma issues has been increasing at an unprecedented pace and the new century has seen further intensification of the phenomenon. Among them, films on the extermination of the Gypsy during the Second World War can be distinguished. It has been estimated that about 90% of the population of the Roma and Sinti (German Gypsies) residing in the Third Reich and the disenfranchised countries – Austria and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia – were murdered at the time. Such terrifying effectiveness would not be possible without the consent of the society - hostile or, at best, indifferent to this ethnic group. These events were totally absent from the public discourse for several decades following the end of the war.

The recent increase of interest in the Roma people has had two main mutually interconnected reasons. Firstly, the situation of this few-million strong community (of six to twelve million people, depending on various sources) over two thirds of which are estimated to have resided in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s was influenced by the collapse of the communist system. Although the system transformation processes put an end to the policy of forced assimilation conducted by the Eastern Bloc countries, they actually "aggravated the already disadvantaged position [of the Roma people], marginalized them even further and exacerbated discrimination against them" leading to "ethnic awakening and mobilization among the Roma population."[3] Roma people become more visible in the public sphere, which does not denote, however, that they were willingly welcomed there. The increasing marginalization of this group has become a new source of social and economic problems for the administration of particular countries, and since the expansion of the European Union in 2004, when the citizens of those countries were granted freedom of movement, the Western European countries have also faced new challenges. Secondly, in the last decades of the 20th century the attention of the Western world was directed to the dilemmas of multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity, and the critical theory of culture, known as the postcolonial theory, deconstructing Eurocentric orders of knowledge, systems of representations and relations between knowledge and power, was paving the way for the hitherto marginal phenomena – discourses of and on minorities.

However, the far-reaching implications for addressing the issue of the Romani genocide were brought about by the third factor, which had appeared much earlier, already in the 1960s: the explosion of memory about the Jewish Holocaust.

[3] A. Mirga, N. Gheorghe, *Romowie w XXI wieku. Studium polityczne*, Kraków 1998, p. 9.

The image of Gypsies in film: from phantasms to new sensitivity

How has the cinema with its long and coherent tradition of presenting Gypsies reacted to the new situation? Given that the tradition was based on images deriving from literature, paintings and music, its origins reach back at least to the beginnings of the 19th century. The change which the cinema at the turn of the centuries underwent was not only a quantitative one. New films argue with idealization and exoticization of Gypsies, with locating them beyond the society and history in a picturesque domain of the myth, songs and dancing. Edward W. Said would have said: with their consequent orientalization, which was only avoided in a few documentaries, usually the ethnographic ones.

In relation to all asymmetrical social relations (and their cultural expressions) founded on domination/subordination, the colonial perspective seems particularly justifiable. Said drew up a register of features characteristic of orientalism, understood "as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient,"[4] enumerating among them the perspective of an outsider, the distance, constructing binary oppositions, absolutization of differences between the familiar and the strange, depriving the strange of the right to have history, generalizing reasoning about the whole on the basis of insignificant details, blindness to nuances and confrontational tone. For the orientalist "the Orient" has no specific localization. It is everything which the West is not. Just like the Roma people.

As someone has stated, Gypsies are not people of the Book. They certainly are not the "people of the cinema" either. Although the European cinema of ethnic minorities does exist (e.g. Turks in Germany, Arabs in France, Indians in Great Britain), in fact, there is no such thing as the cinema of the Roma, only films *about* the Roma. The film images of the Roma people are thus inevitably the results of an external, alien perspective belonging to the non-Roma. Not necessarily in a strictly ethnical sense (yet only one professional director, Tony Gatlif, identifies himself with the Roma roots), more as a cultural location. This situation differentiates the Roma people from other minorities who, at least theoretically, may use film as a medium to express their perspective.

Such a configuration may seem to be an orientalistic model. At the same time, at least some of the films produced within the last dozen years prove that a possibility to avoid the trap exists. That being a Roma person may mean various things: different life strategies, diverse customs, and the whole

[4] E.W. Said, *Orientalism*, London 1997, p. 20.

spectrum of attitudes towards tradition or non-Roma surroundings. Similarly, being a non-Roma person, an outsider, does not prejudge anything. Male – and female, as remarkably the directors are often women – making films about the Roma introduce diverse experiences, motivations and intentions into the meetings with the Roma people. Most frequently it is the experience of some sort of discrimination.

Non-orientalistic sensitivity to nuances which is manifested in the films constitutes a true novelty. If one wanted to mark a line of evolution from the earliest film images of Gypsies to the contemporary ones, it would lead from the products of carefree imagination of "a white man" (which is enough to describe the figure because being part of the dominant culture defines him/her in a complete way), divorced from reality and even not aiming at its cognition – to films in which the not indifferent, of course, presence of the observer, is being disclosed and thematized, inspiring reflection upon the cognizability and translatability of a different culture. Upon them being problematic, if not – utopian.

Some threads present in the "Roma" films of the turn of the centuries are more recurrent than others. Music obviously takes precedence by being treated as the main "stage" of self-presentation of the Roma people to a non-Roma audience, and as an opportunity to reflect upon their regionally differentiated and evolving culture which is, despite appearances, influenced by contemporary transformations of culture in general. One of the few examples of this tendency is an American documentary *When the Road Bends: Tales of a Gypsy Caravan* (2006) by Jasmine Dellal, a young director and producer whose interest in Roma people from different parts of the world and in the ways they define their identity was inspired by her own ethnically complex background (of which Jewish component is dominant, which is always emphasized by the artist).

The second theme favored by film artists is the life of those Roma people who achieved some sort of success outside their community. The impact of the success on their existence either inside or outside their group may be ambivalent, or even dramatic, as became evident in the story of the poet Papusza. Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze devoted their recent film *Papusza* (2013) to the poet, and simultaneously, Angelika Kuźniak published a book of the same title based on the preserved film and radio recordings of the artist. The complex situation of being "a stranger at home", occupying the "in-between" space was also thematized in an excellent Czech documentary *Vojta Lavicka: Ups and Downs* (*Vojta Lavička: Nahoru a dolů*, 2013) by Helena Třeštiková. From 1997, for sixteen years, the documentalist was accompanying her protagonist who, as a leader of the band Gypsy.Cezet, as well as a journalist and an activist, was, for a long period of time, the most recognizable Czech Roma person. Třeštiková was exploring the conflicts antagonizing Czech society through the musician's "ups and downs" (with a notable advantage of the latter).

Porrajmos: the Gypsy Holocaust

Although the new "Roma" films as a whole give grounds for cautious optimism, the assessment of film representations of the Gypsy genocide seems to be a more difficult task. They are in all respects *secondary* to the representation of the Holocaust: they appeared later, use the same set of conventions of representation (yet commemorating the Holocaust has become polyphonic and polymorphic[5] in the course of time, which cannot be staid about the mode of commemorating the Gypsy genocide), and their authors are often artists who emphasize their belonging to the "community of memory" of the Holocaust: once Jewish victims, nowadays their descendants. The Holocaust discourse has thus begun to fulfill the role of "a dominant culture", which allows the story of the Gypsy genocide, providing it is its secondary, subordinate, and *orientalized* version.

Giving a new name to the Gypsy genocide was a gesture of symbolic bringing it out of the Holocaust shade. The term "*Porrajmos*" (literally: devouring) was introduced into the discourse by Ian Hancock, a Romani scholar, in his book *We are the Romani people. Ame sam e Rromane džene.*[6] Bilingual titles were also given to individual chapters of the monograph which Yaron Matras, a linguist and editor of a prestigious British magazine *Romani Studies* sarcastically commented:

> The key events tend to carry [in Hancock's book – note of I.S.] a Romani title – thus "*O Teljaripe:* The move out of India," "*O Aresipe:* Arrival in Byzantium," or *O Baro Porrajmos:* The Holocaust – leaving the impression with the reader that these are established Romani terms, and hence, by implication, that there is an established Romani historiography. In fact, it is in this book itself that Hancock introduces most of these terms, and establishes the historiography.[7]

Since the written Romani language was codified relatively recently and it is known only to a narrow group of intelligentsia it is clear that the Roma have neither historiography nor history in the Western sense, which is historiography or history seen as a record of breakthrough events important for the community. The Gypsy history, however, has been thoroughly studied and recorded, although not by the Gypsy; literature on this subject is vast and ever-growing. Contrary to films about their past, which do not exist, from the only exception being the films devoted to the *Porrajmos*.

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[5] More on plurality of contemporary forms of thematizing the Holocaust in: A. Kluba, "O Shoah po Shoah," *Teksty Drugie* 2010, No. 6, pp. 75–85.

[6] I. Hancock, *We Are the Romani People. Ame sam e Rromane džene*, Hatfield 2002.

[7] Y. Matras, "A Conflict of Paradigms," *Romani Studies* 2004, No. 2, pp. 199–200.

The *Porrajmos* was forgotten for a long time. In his fundamental essay published in 1996, Ian Hancock accused Jews of appropriating the memory of the extermination of Gypsies.[8] Unlike Jews, the Gypsy did not share their experiences. Illiteracy, traditional marginalization, culturally conditioned reluctance to dwell on misery, and restrictions on recollecting the dead, blocked their willingness to bear witness to their experience. All the more so, as Hancock claims, because the world or, at least, the United States, did not want it.

European calling for the memory had, however, a different dynamics – it was dependent on local political contexts. The first scientific publications on the subject began to appear in the West in the same period in which the German Sinti claimed to consider their minority group victims of the Nazi policy of extermination – in the 1970s. For Western Europe, especially for the Federal Republic of Germany, it was a decade of crisis, radicalization of the public mood and terrorism. Sinti activated themselves in the face of growing discrimination and aggression which they began to experience in their country. The 1979 convention of Sinti and Roma representatives from other countries held in the former Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in order to pay tribute to their compatriots murdered by the Nazi was to attract the attention of the worldwide public opinion to the current oppression and new rise of racism, as well as to the threat of repetition of the "Gypsy Holocaust". The hunger strike organized the following year at the former Dachau camp by the Sinti activists, who managed to gain support of influential personalities in the German public life and to voice their protest in the media, initiated a worldwide debate and resulted in the institutionalization of the movement.

The situation in Poland was different for two reasons. Firstly, in the 1970s and 1980s the relations between the Gypsy, the society and authorities were sometimes tense, however they did not threaten the lives of the Gypsy; the first wave of pogroms (this is how it was termed in the Polish press) of a vividly racist nature passed through the post-communist countries at the beginning of the 1990s, right after the transformation. Secondly, until the mid-1980s the PRL politics of remembrance prevented narration about the *Porrajmos*. The official government policy was rarely in tune with the social mood, however, there was a consensus on this very issue. The Polish, similarly to the German, preferred not to return to those events, yet, unlike in the Federal Republic of Germany, such return was ruled out in Poland: nobody wanted it. In ac-

[8] I. Hancock, *Responses to the Porrajmos: The Romani Holocaust*, in: A.S. Rosenbaum (ed.), *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, Boulder 1996, pp. 39–64. I refer to the electronic version: http://www.radoc.net/radoc.php?doc=art_e_holocaust_responses&lang=en&articles=true [accessed on: 3 August 2013].

cordance with the official interpretation, the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp was a place of martyrdom of citizens of different countries, first and foremost the Poles, but not of extermination. Either of Jews or any other nations.[9]

Broken silence

It could have been presumed that in the second half of the 1980s the social climate began to change, as in 1988 Alexander Ramati, a Jewish-American writer and director, born in Brest on the Bug river, was able to direct a film adaptation of his own novel *And the Violins Stopped Playing* in co-production with Poland. All the indications are that it was the first film in the world on the issue of the Gypsy extermination during the Second World War. The issue was addressed in an openly tendentious way. According to the film, even though the Gypsy were deported to ghettos and subsequently sent to concentration camps, the actions of the Nazis, while not being racially motivated or aimed at the extermination of the whole nation, did not amount to the "Gypsy Holocaust". – *We are Aryans, so we aren't going to be gassed* – the protagonist explains to his son when they are both sent to the so called Gypsy camp in Auschwitz. – *But in the end the survivors will also be gassed. The murderers won't let the witnesses of what was done to the Jews stay alive.* Ascribing to the Gypsies a belief of belonging to the Aryan race is manifestly an abuse[10] and presuming the above quoted reason for being killed in gas chambers is an insult to the memory of the murdered. Gypsies were even subject to double stigmatization in Auschwitz: for racial reasons and as individuals posing a threat to social governance.

Ramati's film remained fully consistent with the PRL politics of remembrance. It comes as no surprise, because otherwise Poland would not have participated (significantly) in its production and it would not have been released in the Polish cinemas. All Poles in the film, from aristocrats to the common people, in solidarity, helped Gypsies flee from their persecutors. Eventually, when the fugitives are caught by Germans – which takes place in Hungary (members of the socialist block countries during the realization of the film,

[9] See: S. Kapralski, "Od milczenia do 'trudnej pamięci.' Państwowe Muzeum Obozu Auschwitz-Birkenau i jego rola w dyskursie publicznym," in: F. Tych, M. Adamczyk-Garbowska (eds.), *Następstwa zagłady Żydów. Polska 1944–2010*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, Lublin 2011, pp. 527–551.

[10] The myth of the Aryan race had a long history and was evolving in the course of time. As early as in the late 19th century its place of origin was claimed to be in Northern Europe, not in the Ganges valley as it had been previously believed. See: R. Sala, *Krytyczny słownik mitów i symboli nazizmu*, trans. Z. Jakubowska, A. Rurarz, Warszawa 2006, pp. 33–43.

Slovakia and Hungary were presented as territories exceptionally friendly towards Gypsies, also during the war) – they are treated properly by them. In Auschwitz the Gypsies are looked after by doctor Mengele himself, who indeed conducts some unspecified experiments on Gypsy children, but who is able to appreciate the protagonist's musical artistry and protects his kinsmen as a matter of fact. Although in the end of the film the protagonist is killed together with nearly all his family (except for his daughter who was earlier taken by a peasant woman into her home and his son who managed to flee from the camp), the film persuades the viewer that the truly tragic fate only befell the Jews, who are absent on the screen, and of whom the Romani people talk about with compassion and horror.

A year after the premiere of this prejudicial film, there emerged quite a different testimony: a book by an expert and enthusiast of the Gypsy culture, poet Jerzy Ficowski, *Gypsies in Poland. History and Customs*,[11] which was a new version of his pioneering work *Cyganie polscy. Szkice historyczno-obyczajowe* (Polish Gypsies. Sketches of History, Manners and Customs) published in 1953. The author, who had been staying with Gypsies for several years, devoted an extensive chapter, abounding in witnesses' and survivors' accounts, to the war period. From the perspective of "the work on memory" of the Holocaust the last fragment of the work, thematizing song lyrics, which are usually songs of "lament beyond historical background of time and place", taken down by the author in the first years of the postwar period, is the most significant:

> These Gypsy songs about the mass extermination differ from other Gypsy music, above all in the fact that they contain historical information. The words "Ashvitz" (Auschwitz) and "Oshvientzim" (Oświęcim) are signs of the times and its tragic events. In their traditional, uniform pattern of life, taking place somewhere in the margins of history, it is only exceptional and turbulent events that could enter into Gypsy folk songs, which are normally quite indifferent to historical events. Only a cataclysm that affected their own people directly could leave a new trace in their folk poetry. For the Gypsy folk song is *sui generis* a-historical, speaking of things external and ever-topical, like love, death, poverty, flight, loss of liberty, traveling etc. but it does not usually record names of places or concrete events. (...) Today they have almost entirely died out, and although they have not died from memory among the older generation, they are no longer sung. (...) This song is falling into oblivion along with memories of those years.[12]

The phenomenon of accelerated – from our perspective – repression of traumatic events from collective memory is not unfamiliar to anthropologists. Cultures, according to Jan Assmann, can be divided according to their

[11] J. Ficowski, *Gypsies in Poland. History and Customs*, trans. E. Healey, Warszawa 1989.
[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 108–110.

attitude towards their own past into "cold" and "hot" ones as they choose different strategies of survival and consolidation.

> Cold societies do not live by forgetting what hot societies remember – they simply live with a different kind of memory, and in order to do that, they must block out history. For this they need the techniques of cold memory. (...) The tranquilizing element serves the cold option, whereby change is frozen. The meaning that is remembered here lies in recurrence and regularity, as opposed to the unique and the extraordinary; and, in continuity, as opposed to change and upheaval.[13]

Gypsies, as described by Ficowski, fully conformed to the Assmann the characteristics of "cold" cultures. However, the near future was to show the fallacy of Ficowski's prognoses from the late 1980s, made on the threshold of the process of political transformation and following changes in Polish politics of remembrance which he could not have foreseen. What followed was just the opposite: as if the passage of time gave rise to the memory of the *Porrajmos* and multiplied the memory, generating new places of remembrance and practices of its cultivation. Seemingly, the processes were analogous to "producing" the memory of Shoah, yet if the Jewish culture is a model example of cultures of commemoration, the Roma one is their counter-example. Is – or perhaps – used to be?

The answer to the question about circumstances of reproduction – and production, which is even more accurate in reference to *Porrajmos* than to Shoah – of the lost memory of those events should not be sought in the Romani culture as a hypothetical monad, but in the sphere of diffusion between the Romani culture and the dominant culture. The Roma would not have shared their experiences if they had not had "a space to speak from" or if the recipients of their speech were non-existent, if they had not acquired their own intelligentsia recruiting from cultural migrants. If gradual changes in their surroundings had not occurred, owing to which the story of the *Porrajmos* could have been voiced, and which resulted in, *inter alia*, creating a monument commemorating the liquidation of the so-called Gypsy camp in Birkenau, today the place of annual celebrations. Writing on the Polish politics of remembrance the sociologist Lech M. Nijakowski is wrong when he considers erection of this monument and annual celebrations to be a clear sign of conflictogenic distinctiveness of the Romani memory, which, according to him, stores "not only other content and interpretations of common history, but also uses distinct narrative schemes."[14] Although it is probable that "the memory of living in a gypsy caravan," in fact, amounts to "a living history of this community and the basis for a retrospective utopia for many Romani

[13] J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization. Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, Cambridge 2011, pp. 52–53.

[14] L.M. Nijakowski, *Polska polityka pamięci. Esej socjologiczny*, Warszawa 2008, p. 174.

people," the means of cultivating the memory of *Porrajmos* was adapted by them from the external world as new narrative schemes. The signal stating when – and how – private memory is to enter the collective memory of the Romani and non-Romani people also came from the outside. These circumstances are not supportive for the hermetic nature of the Roma culture, on the contrary, they prove its sudden depressurization, a radical shift of the pattern.

Why remember?

Eventually, there might have not been room for the memory of *Porrajmos* if the Roma community had not felt threatened again and the non-Roma, or at least part of the community, had not taken responsibility to prevent a disaster. This past experience is crucial for the present. The cinema had and still has its role to play in the functionalization of this component within the European heritage.

Since the time the film *And the Violins Stopped Playing* has been released, a dozen of subsequent films, mainly documentaries, about Nazi persecution of the Roma have been produced in the world. *Korkoro* (alternative title: *Freedom/Liberté*), a feature film from 2009 by the mentioned earlier Tony Gatlif, is a story inspired by real events about a French Gypsy family murdered in Auschwitz. A couple of noble (non-Romani) people, who are completely lonely in their efforts, do not manage to protect the family in a community hostile to Gypsies. Gatlif's work quite paternalistically infantilizes the Roma rather than commemorates them, and incidentally adds to the currently vivid discussion on French participation in the racist crimes.

So far, the documentaries about Romani life during the war have not moved beyond informing the public opinion on the past events. Works which would serve less immediate purposes have not yet been created. Unless one of the segments of the film *Memories* (2007) – *Respite* by Harun Farocki, a German artist, comprised of materials recorded in the Westerbork camp in Holland in 1944 is considered to be such a work. The recurring take of a girl standing at the door of a freight wagon just before the departure became one of the icons of the Holocaust. The girl, for a long time considered to be Jewish, turned out to be Sinti. Establishing the girl's identity and circumstances of her death, as well as the fate of other Romani victims of extermination are presented in the documentary *Settela, Face of the Past* (*Settela, het gezicht van het verleden*, 1994) by a Dutch artist Cherry Duyns. There are also two Polish modest television films: *Gypsy Souls* (*Cygańskie Zaduszki*, 1999) by Wanda Rollny which is a record of celebrations gathering the whole Romani families by the graves of their relatives and in places symbolically commemorating the murdered, and

Gypsy Fire (*Cygański ogień*, 2005) by Katarzyna Pazurkiewicz whose protagonist is Edward Dębicki – a Roma, incidentally, the poet Papusza's close relative, a musician and organizer of Romani music life and author of the memoirs *Bird of the Dead* (*Ptak umarłych*, 2004) covering the war period.

A classic solution used in almost every documentary is to present archival materials together with the accounts of the survivors. Alexandra Isles, the author of the film *Europe's Gypsies in the Holocaust* (2002), an American director of Swedish descent, managed to reach witnesses from numerous countries, including Dina Gottliebova, an artist, a Czech Jew, who was painting portraits of Gypsy victims of experiments under the orders of doctor Mengele. The works by Gottliebova are on display in the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum whose collection provided the whole archival sources used in the documentary. A Canadian film *A People Uncounted* (2011) by Aaron Yeger, a first-time director, is structured similarly, yet on a larger scale. Among initiators and contributors of this project are the descendants of the Holocaust survivors. *A People Uncounted*, dedicated to *the ones who do not want to be silent in the face of prejudices and racism*, unlike the Alexandra Isles' film is openly rooted in the present: both the Holocaust survivors and their children talk about the joy of life and pride to be Romani, Sinti or Gypsy people – they use all of the expressions – but also about discrimination and aggression experienced by the people today. It is a new tone which would be difficult to find in films – not only the Polish ones, but also those produced in the part of Europe, where Gypsies are also subject to persecution. Although their persecution is prevalent everywhere, the Czech, Slovak, Bulgarian, former Yugoslavian and Polish films I am acquainted with testify, only with one exception, to the fact that no relation is seen between the events from the war period and the current situation. Whereas, it is the past experience that may become a real perspective for the future. Such was the origin of excavating the Gypsy Holocaust from oblivion: the timeliness of the threat which is still present and even increasing.

So far the final word on the issue belongs to a Hungarian-German-French co-production *Just the Wind* (*Csak a szél*, 2012) by Bence Fliegauf. Despite the fact that its topic, literally speaking, *is not* the Holocaust of the war period. The film thematizes the presumption of social approval to exterminate minorities which remain unchanged: racism and lack of tolerance to violation of the rules of social life respected by the majority. The film refers to actual events of 2008 and 2009. The Hungarian Roma became subject to attacks which resulted in the death of several people and injuries of several dozens. "The whole Romani community in Hungary – the director said – almost a million people, were on the verge of hysteria. Politicians, journalists, intellectuals took part in the discussion. Each one blamed somebody else. And I was thinking: where are the

artists?"[15] Fliegauf does not reconstruct these events. He tells a story about one day of a fictitious Roma family: mother, her two children and their seriously ill grandfather. They all intend to soon join the father who emigrated to Canada. As one may infer – because of a growing feeling of being trapped created with the use of visual and dramatic means, which make watching the film a torture – for most of the characters, the day will be the last one.

By allowing the audience to anticipate the development of events, the director has them on his – and the victims' – side from the very beginning. However, in the course of time the viewer's position becomes increasingly less comfortable. We are forced to confront our own aversion, repulsion, and contempt suppressed from our consciousness. It is not difficult to recognize our own prejudices in the way of thinking of one of the two policemen visiting the house, whose inhabitants were murdered the previous night: why is it, the policeman wonders, that the decent Gypsies were killed? The Gypsies who had a job, sent their children to school, who had a bathroom? As if the rest, who do not conform to these standards, should have earned an approval to live.

In contrast to almost all artists mentioned above, who either in their films or interviews disclose their ethnic identity, mainly Romani or Jewish, treating it as a legitimate entitlement to give their opinions on the extermination of the Roma, Fliegauf does not mention his roots, so nothing is known about him. Apparently, he believes that inheriting the memory of repressions of one's own ethnic group is not necessary for him as an artist and an individual to feel obliged to protest against violence.

A recent documentary by a Hungarian director Eszter Hajdú *Judgement in Hungary* (*Ítélet Magyarországon*, 2013) is a kind of post-script to *Just the Wind*. For 30 months Hajdú recorded the course of legal action against four perpetrators of killing the Roma in the years 2008–2009 – the events which made Fliegauf react. The long-lasting legal action was continued with descending public attention, nonetheless it provided an opportunity to observe the polarization of the Hungarian society. For some Hungarian people racism and neofascism remain, if not an attractive, then at least an acceptable worldview.

The film *Just the Wind* suggests one of the possible answers to the question *why* we should remember about genocide. "That is – as James E. Young puts it while pondering upon Holocaust memorials – how we respond to the current moment in light of our remembered past". Because if we "remain unchanged by the recollective act, it could be said that we have not remembered at all."[16]

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[15] "Tańczymy na beczce prochu," Bendek Fliegauf was interviewed by P.T. Felis, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 10 December 2012, p. 16.

[16] J.E. Young, "Memory and Counter-Memory: Towards a Social Aesthetic of Holocaust," in: F.C. DeCoste, B. Schwartz (eds.), *The Holocaust's Ghost: Writings on Art, Politics, Law, and Education*, Alberta 2000, p. 177.

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